A Letter to our Community about COVID-19
May 5, 2020

In these extraordinary times we want to assure you that at Waypoint, we are taking action to keep our patients and staff – and our community – safe, all while providing critical mental health care to those most needing our services.

On Friday, May 1st, the hospital received notification an employee had tested positive for COVID-19. This is the only instance of COVID at our hospital at this time. We have not had any patient cases and no other staff cases.

Waypoint worked with the Simcoe/Muskoka District Health Unit to investigate and review our extensive and detailed procedures in place for respiratory infection prevention and control. As a result, Public Health has advised there is no need to test staff or patients, or for anyone to self-isolate at this time and we are not in outbreak. We do continue to be vigilant in our procedures and are enhancing efforts to ensure compliance. Some of these efforts and other activities at Waypoint include:

- Screening anyone entering the building for symptoms of illness and asking staff to self-monitor for symptoms of illness before they come to work and throughout their shift
- Having patients stay on their units so they are not intermingling with others or travelling throughout the hospital, and regularly monitoring them for symptoms
- Closing the hospital to visitors and deliveries accept operational supplies
- Providing a new mask each day to staff on clinical programs and those who cannot physically distance by 6ft. These masks continue to be replaced at any time if they are wet, soiled or damaged.
- Opening a separate isolation unit for any patients with symptoms of illness and all new admissions – and testing these patients as well as any patients in close contact with someone with symptoms. Staff who meet the self-assessment criteria are also tested.
- Equipping staff on the isolation unit with full personal protective equipment (PPE) so they are ready to safely care for patients while also tending to their mental health care needs.
- Adhering to public health directives and recommendations on use of personal protective equipment, hand hygiene, and physical distancing and enhancing cleaning.
- Conducting a STOPCOVID research study through the Waypoint Research Institute under the leadership of Dr. Kat Askland to gather feedback from staff on the actions taken by the hospital to keep them safe to help inform how to make improvements.
- Implementing the provincial long-term care recommendations on the Horizon Program for Geriatric Psychiatry and where applicable, in the Specialized Geriatric Services program.
- Working with our partners in Simcoe County/Muskoka to determine how Waypoint can support long-term care, retirement homes and Homes for Special Care in our region while ensuring our own operational needs are met. This support may include infection control support, personal protective equipment and staffing.
- Collaborating with GBGH and CHIGAMIK to operate the local COVID-19 Assessment Centre and working as part of the mobile efforts to test patients and staff in long-term care settings.
Engaging 150 volunteers in Operation Sew, an initiative to sew 600 isolation gowns for the hospital. Many of the volunteers are Waypoint staff, retired staff and their families and friends and we are very thankful to everyone involved.

In addition to caring for our patients, it is more important than ever to care for our staff. They are working tirelessly to care for our patients while prioritizing safety for everyone during these uncertain times.

This is Mental Health Week, and in partnership with Ontario’s new Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, we are doing our part to support the province’s health care workers, care providers and first responders’ mental health needs. Waypoint, along with other provincial partners, has launched COVID Frontline Wellness Support. This service connects any healthcare/frontline worker or first responder in our region impacted by COVID-19 with supports and access to services. It is open to anyone in any role including direct patient care, patient/client support services, environmental and food services, administrative or management. To access this service, please visit waypointcentre.ca/programs_and_services/covid_frontline_wellness or call Waypoint’s Central Intake at 705-549-3181, ext. 2308.

COVID-19 represents a significant challenge to all of our health care organizations. We are immensely grateful to our staff working to deliver mental health care, and to the many businesses, community groups, donors and staff who have donated to Waypoint during this time. This support is helping us recognize staff and provide treats to patients, as well as meet our fundraising goals for Mental Health First Aid training, new equipment and future needs.

For accurate and up to date information, please consult reputable sources including the Ontario Government and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. And remember to look after your own mental health needs as well - talk to your family physician, make an appointment at the virtual walk in clinic or call your local crisis line or emergency room if you are in a crisis. 211Ontario.ca is a great way to find more information and lists mental health and addiction supports in the region and in the province.

We all have an important role to play in flattening the curve. Please, do your part to contain the spread of COVID-19 by washing your hands and practicing physical distancing. We also ask that you practice compassion and kindness, not only to others around you but to yourself. We will get through this together. Stay safe and be well.

Please follow us on social media:

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Twitter - @WaypointCtr
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